

# HEALTHY GLUTEN-FREE NOODLE ALTERNATIVES



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Almost every healthy eating program recommends that you to stay away from refined carbohydrates and processed grain products. Yes, everyone's beloved pasta and noodles get a spot in the naughty corner for being too high in carbohydrates and for containing gluten and other anti-nutrients that affect our gut health, digestion and metabolism.

That doesn't mean that you have to miss out on things like Spaghetti Bolognese, Pad Thai and Pesto Pasta. In fact, you can have all of these dishes in a more nutrient-dense way, by simply swapping the regular pasta and noodles with a healthier, gluten-free alternative. Here are some of the best choices to choose from.

## Rice noodles

Rice noodles are typically made using white rice flour and water. Although rice flour is high in carbohydrates, it is essentially a simple starch and a source of glucose, which is easily used by the body for energy. Unlike brown rice, which contains anti-nutrients such as lectins and phytates in the bran of the grain, white rice is milled and polished. This process removes most of the antinutrients.

White rice, and rice noodles are gluten-free, sustainable, affordable, easily accessible and suitable for vegans and vegetarians. They are not particularly nutritious but can be eaten in moderation, especially if they serve as a carrier for more nutrient-dense foods such as vegetables and fish. Sushi or Vietnamese spring rolls anyone?

There are several types of rice noodles such as thin vermicelli or fatter flat noodles and they all have neutral flavour, just like plain rice does. Rice noodles are easy to prepare; just follow the instructions on the packet but make sure not to overcook them to retain that lovely al dente texture and shape.

Rice noodles can be used in both cold and hot dishes, and they are perfectly suited to Asian recipes. Rice paper rolls are great for making healthy rolls and wraps.

**Per 100 grams (cooked noodles):** 109 cals, 25 g carbs, 0 grams fat, 1 gram fibre, 1 gram protein.



## Sweet potato noodles (Korean glass noodles)

These noodles are sometimes called glass noodles and you will usually find them on Korean menus, such as in a dish called Japchae. These are dried noodles made with sweet potato starch and water. They are slightly grey and transparent with a firm and slick texture, and a slightly sweeter taste than regular rice noodles.

To prepare sweet potato noodles, cook them in boiling, salted water for around 6 minutes, stirring frequently. Then drain and rinse under cold water before using in salads, soups or stir-fries. Please note that these are not the same as spiral sweet potato noodles (see below).

Look for these noodles in your local Asian grocer or online.

**Per 50 grams (uncooked):** 175 calories, 45 grams carbs, <1 gram fat, 0 grams fibre and protein, some calcium and iron.

[Check out this recipe for Korean japchae here.](#)



## Soba (buckwheat) noodles

Traditional soba noodles are made with 100% buckwheat flour, which is a gluten-free flour, high in carbohydrates and some pretty impressive nutrients. It's high in protein, iron, magnesium, zinc and B vitamins. And unlike wheat noodles, soba contains all eight essential amino acids, including lysine, which is pretty cool. Plus, soba noodles also contain some antioxidants (rutin and quercetin). Please note: you might want to avoid buckwheat and buckwheat products if you're trying to heal any gut and digestive issues but otherwise it's a good choice.



Read the label to make sure the soba are made **without added wheat flour**.

Soba noodles are spaghetti-thin, light brown/grey in colour with a fairly strong, slightly sweet buckwheat flavour (kind of nutty). They are very popular in Japanese cuisine and can be served cold (usually dipped in flavourful sauce) or hot in a soup or stir-fry. To cook soba noodles, add them to boiling water and cook for a few minutes. Drain and rinse. Try it stir-fried with chicken and greens.

**Per 55 gram (uncooked):** 170 grams, 1 gram fat, 33 grams carbs, 5 grams fibre, 8 grams protein.



## Kelp noodles

Kelp noodles are made from kelp seaweed but they don't actually look or taste like seaweed, luckily. They are clear, glass noodles that usually require no cooking. They can be soaked and rinsed, and used in salads, soups and stir-fries. They have a fairly neutral, almost bland taste, and work well with strong, zesty flavours and ingredients.

These noodles are low in calories and carbohydrates, gluten-free, vegan, paleo and raw foodie-friendly. You can find them in most health food stores, some supermarkets and online.



## Konjac or shirataki noodles

Konjac noodles, also known as shirataki noodles, are made from a root vegetable called Konjac. Konjac has been a popular Asian staple food for hundreds of years.

The noodles are mainly made with water and glucomannan, a water-soluble dietary fibre. They are very low in carbohydrates and calories, are gluten free and have little flavour of their own. The noodles are wavy, clear white, slightly gelatinous but firm and come in a dry or cooked form (packed in water). You will mostly find them pre-cooked and sold in water, so they need to be rinsed well before using (don't be put off by the slight odour when you open the packet as it disappears once the noodles are rinsed).

Shirataki noodles don't contain any nutrients but are high in fibre and can be used to bulk up nutritious salads, soups and stir-fries. They can also be pan-fried (dry roasted) over high heat to achieve a more crunchy texture.

**Per 100 grams (cooked, drained):** 8-10 calories, 0 grams fat, less than 1 gram of carbohydrates, 5 grams fibre, less than 1 gram protein.



## Zucchini noodles

Zucchini noodles are essentially thin, curly ribbons of raw zucchini (courgette). The best way to create zucchini noodles is by using a vegetable spiralizer or a spiral slicer such as the Paderno World Cuisine spiralizer or a handheld slicer. These gadgets can often create a couple of different sized noodle-like ribbons and can be used on a variety of vegetables and fruit.

Zucchini noodles are best served raw or just slightly cooked (pan-fried quickly in some olive oil or butter) so that they retain their crunchy texture and form. They are great in salads or can be served warm with your favourite meat or vegetarian sauce.

Zucchini noodles are vegan, paleo, and gluten-free friendly. Zucchini is a good source of vitamins C and A.

**Per 100 grams:** 17 calories, <1 gram fat, 3 grams carbohydrates, 1.5 grams protein, 1.2 grams fibre.



### **Sweet potato noodles**

Similarly to zucchini noodles, sweet potato noodles are usually made using a vegetable spiralizer; however, they do need to be cooked. You can pan fry them in some olive oil or butter or roast in a hot oven for 15 minutes, until just tender. Once cooked, they can be used in a salad or in place of pasta with your favourite sauce.

Sweet potato is a nutrient-dense food that is suitable to most diets.

**Per 100 grams:** 86 calories, 22 grams carbohydrates, 0 grams fat, 1.6 grams protein and 3 grams fibre.



[Find more paleo noodles recipes and ideas on the blog.](#)